



PREVENTION BEGINS AT HOME

Prevention really does begin at home! Parents are the single greatest influence on their children and play a major role in determining whether or not their kids will use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. The first step in helping young people is learning what to do. To assist parents, we have created this prevention guide. Please save this resource and post it where you can refer to it often. ***It really works!***

START TALKING TO CHILDREN EARLY

Attitudes about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs are formed early in life, so start talking with your children as soon as possible. Look for “teachable moments” when an alcohol, tobacco, or a drug-related event has caught your child’s attention. Use the opportunity to share your views and provide accurate information.

- ✦ If your child is watching a show that portrays alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use as funny or grown-up, you might say something like, *“This program doesn’t show the other side of drugs. Some of the bad things that could happen are...”*
- ✦ When an alcohol commercial catches your child’s interest you might ask, *“Why do you suppose beer ads use football players? Do you think drinking helps in sports?”* Start your child thinking about what the ads are implying.

Remember, most children have their first alcohol, tobacco, or other drug experience between the ages of 11 and 14. The earlier you begin talking openly about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs to your children, the more likely they are to accept your views and information rather than relying on peers or the media.

SET RULES AND CONSEQUENCES

Children are less likely to use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs if their parents disapprove and have told them so **clearly and firmly**. Tell your children what you expect of them and impose consequences if they do not honor those expectations. Here is a simple four-step process.

1. Know **exactly** what you expect. Reach a consensus with your child’s other parent. For health and legal reasons, we recommend no use of illegal drugs **ever** and no use of alcohol or tobacco **until legal age**.
2. Sit down with your children and tell them exactly what you expect and why. Make certain they fully understand. Let them know you are serious.
3. Tell them what will happen if they do not honor your expectations. Choose consequences that are immediate and important to your child.
4. Be prepared to follow through. Be realistic about consequences. If you make them too severe, you may be reluctant to impose them. ***Certainty and consistency is more important than severity.***

HELP CHILDREN LEARN HOW TO SAY “NO”

Help your children practice ahead of time so they will know what to say when someone puts pressure on them to use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. Tell them that saying “no” is hard for everybody, including adults. Let them know this is not a trust issue, but rather a matter of being prepared.

- ✦ Ask your child questions like, *“What would you do if some older children came up to you and offered some marijuana? What would you say to them?”*
- ✦ *“What could you say if you finished babysitting and Mr. Jones wants to drive you home, but he is drunk?”*
- ✦ *“What would you say if your best friends offered you some beer? What would you say if they called you a chicken?”*

Help them come up with responses to use, such as “*No thanks, not tonight,*” or “*My dad would kill me,*” or just plain “*NO.*” When children practice saying the words ahead of time, it is more likely they will actually say them when the situation arises. This is true for both children and adults.

KNOW WHAT YOUR CHILDREN ARE DOING

- ✦ Be selective about television shows, movies, and concerts that present the illegal use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs as normal and fun.
- ✦ Check ahead to see if parties will be supervised and to make certain alcohol or other drugs will not be available. If you have **any** doubts, do not hesitate to say “no” to your children.
- ✦ Get to know your children’s friends and their parents. Know where your children are, who they are with, what they are doing, and when they are to return home.
- ✦ Set reasonable curfews for your children. Be clear about places and people that are off limits.
- ✦ Call other parents to let them know how you feel. They probably feel the same way you do and will be glad you called.
- ✦ Setting limits for children is a way of showing you care. They may not like it now, but they will thank you later.

SET A GOOD EXAMPLE

Children often do what parents do. By setting a good example, we increase the chances that our children will not use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Children need to **see** that people can have a good time without alcohol or other drugs.

- ✦ If you drink, let your children see you limit the alcohol you consume, abstain at times, and allow them to hear you say “*No thanks, I’m driving.*”
- ✦ If you don’t drink, explain to your children why you have made this choice. Highlight examples of low-risk **adult** drinking to them so they will have guidelines to follow should they choose to drink as adults.
- ✦ Show your children you are a responsible host by having non-alcoholic drinks available for guests. Never “push” drinks and always serve food with drinks.
- ✦ Demonstrate positive ways to handle stress. Practice relaxing, exercising, or working at a hobby instead of having a drink.
- ✦ Use prescription drugs and over-the-counter medications only when necessary and always as directed. ***Never use illegal drugs.***

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Help create an environment which supports safe, healthy, drug-free children. Challenge anyone who promotes drug use to young people. Join drug prevention organizations.

REMEMBER

Children don’t stay away from alcohol and other drugs by chance. It takes thoughtful planning and effort.

If you would like more information about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, or if you’d like additional copies of this prevention guide, please contact:

Alcohol and Drug Information Clearinghouse
Alcoholism Council of Nebraska
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